

Brief questionnaire of parental response to disruptive behavior (PRDB-Q): Parental perspective

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Título: Cuestionario breve de respuesta parental ante el comportamiento disruptivo (RPCD): Perspectiva de los padres.

Resumen: El objetivo de este estudio es desarrollar y validar el *Cuestionario de respuesta parental ante el comportamiento disruptivo (RPCD)*. Los padres pueden actuar frente a los problemas y sus repercusiones emocionales de forma proactiva, buscando cómo manejarlos positivamente, o pueden centrar su atención en la respuesta emocional que genera el comportamiento disruptivo, dejándose llevar por la misma. Para evaluar el tipo de orientación personal prevalente frente a la disrupción, orientar a los padres y valorar el efecto de la intervención se requiere un tipo de cuestionario como el que se propone. Participaron en el estudio 420 padres y sus hijos. Se estudió la validez estructural del cuestionario comparando mediante Análisis factorial confirmatorio un modelo multifactorial (cinco factores específicos) y otro multifactorial-jerárquico (5.2), la validez cruzada de ambos modelos, y la validez predictiva, analizando la relación entre la percepción de los padres y las percepciones de los hijos evaluadas mediante el "Cuestionario de clima de gestión del comportamiento percibido por los hijos". Los resultados pusieron de manifiesto que los dos modelos presentaban índices de ajuste buenos y prácticamente idénticos, y semejantes en las dos submuestras. A su vez, el análisis de correlaciones puso de manifiesto que, aunque en general la relación entre las percepciones de los padres y las de sus hijos va en la dirección esperada, esto no ocurre siempre.

Palabras clave: clima familiar, problemas de conducta, parentalidad positiva.

Abstract: The aim of this study is to develop and validate the *questionnaire of parental response to disruptive behavior (PRDB)*. Parents can act proactively towards problems and their emotional repercussions, focusing on how to handle them positively, or can focus their attention on the emotional response generated by behavior problems, being overburdened by them. In order to assess the prevalent personal orientation to cope with disruption, to guide parents and to assess the effect of psychological interventions, a questionnaire such as the one proposed here is required. A total of 420 parents and their children participated in the study. The structural validity of the questionnaire was tested using confirmatory factor analysis first to compare a multifactorial model (five specific factors) with a multifactorial-hierarchical model (with two second-order factors), and second, to study the cross validity of both models. The predictive validity was tested analyzing the relationship between parents' and children's perceptions of family climate. Children's perceptions were assessed with the "Questionnaire of Behavior Management Climate perceived by children." Results showed that both models had good and similar fit indices that were almost identical in the two subsamples. Besides, the correlation analysis showed that although in general the relationship between perceptions of parents and their children is in the expected direction, this does not always happen.

Key words: family climate, behavior problems, positive parenting.

Introduction

Educating a child with behavioral problems such as frequent tantrum, disobedience, impudence, or aggressiveness is a challenge for families. In fact, one of the most important families' concerns is children's behavioral problems (Montiel-Nava, Montiel-Barbero & Peña, 2005; Robles & Romero, 2011) to such an extent that in an epidemiological study carried out with a sample of 1220 parents, 52% believed they needed psychological help to solve certain identified problems (Cantero-García & Alonso-Tapia, 2016a).

The way in which families deal with these behavioral problems can influence both the well-being of children and parents' emotional balance, affecting the family climate as a whole, that is, the positive or negative state of well-being resulting from the set of interaction patterns that occur among people within a given family (Alonso-Tapia, Simón & Asensio, 2013). These kinds of actions, if they are not adequate, can explain the emergence of new maladaptive behaviors in children, but also influence parents' psychological well-being, and consequently conditioning their psychological health (Luengo Martín, 2014; Pérez, Menéndez & Hidalgo, 2014).

Several studies had provided evidence that parents whose children have behavioral problems, often have higher rates of divorce, tend to have less social support, and have higher levels of stress (Montiel-Nava et al., 2005; Pérez-López, Rodríguez-Cano, Montealegre, Pérez-Lag, Perea & Botella 2011). This may happen by a lack of adequate coping strategies for managing behavioral problems, a lack that not only affects parents but also children's behaviors, resulting in a "snowball-effect" situation, which means that the higher the parental stress the higher the behavioral problems.

However, studies such as the one carried out by Parra and Oliva (2006) suggest that if families know to deal with their children's behavioral problems in a more positive way, creating a warm and caring environment, this knowledge has a positive impact in parents' psychological well-being as well as in the decrease of children's behavioral problems. In addition, good family relationships increase the power of parents' influence on children resulting in a reduction of the possibilities of performing antisocial behavior.

There are many studies allowing us to know the effectiveness of different strategies for the management of behavior problems (Gardner, Montgomery & Knerr, 2015; Romero, Villar, Luengo, Gómez-Fraguela & Robles, 2013; Webster-Stratton, Reid & Hammond, 2001). However, most of these studies focus on children. Concerning parents, we also identify a wide literature, particularly oriented to parental educational styles (Baumrind, 1971; Torío, Peña & Caro, 2008), which are the most important and fundamental basis

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on which the socialization of children is developed both within the family context as well as in the society context. This idea is supported by recent studies such as the one conducted by Fuentes, Alarcón, García and Gracia (2015). However, research on how parents' emotional well-being affect the use of specific strategies for the management of children's misbehavior is scant.

Since the use of specific strategies, both positive and negative, affects the improvement or worsening of behavioral problems and consequently, parents' psychological well-being, understanding the way and extent in which this occurs becomes crucial. Given these facts, together with limitations of previous studies, it is necessary to have adequate assessment instruments that allow us to evaluate not only the effects of the specific strategies that parents use to manage their children's disruptive behavior in order to improve them, but also the emotional repercussion of such strategies on parents' emotional response.

There are a wide literature on strategies about how to manage behavior problems and the conditions for their effectiveness. These strategies are based on assumptions about the value of reinforcement, punishment, negotiation and time-out (Gardner, Montgomery & Knerr, 2015; Sanders, Kirby, Tellegen, & Day, 2014). The use of these strategies can at times be ineffective, at least in the short term, and so it is possible that this ineffectiveness generates stress. In such cases, and according to Kuhl (1994, 1996, 2000), people can act based on two dispositional orientations when self-regulating their own emotional response. The first one, which he calls "*state orientation*", implies that attention is focused on the emotional state, a situation in which the subject ruminates about its failure, and he or she does not proceed to look for strategies more effective. This state can generate feelings of lack of control, demotivation and even depressive feelings (Kuhl y Beckmann, 1994). The second disposition is the "*action orientation*". In this case, people's attention focuses on the search for alternative ways of action that can reduce the emotional impact while, at the same time, the try to solve the problem that generated stress. To achieve this objective, instead of being constantly ruminating about the negative feeling that has generated the problem, they immediately take action, applying new and more effective strategies. This happens, for example, when people try to focus on the positive aspects of the situation -positive thinking- or, in the specific case of stress generated by behavior problems, when parents try to talk and cooperate with children in solving the problems that generated the disruptive behavior, or to help them to find ways to improve their behavior. In the context of Kuhl's approach, it is expected that responses to disruptive behavior that imply lack of motivation and self-control will be negatively related to responses that involve focusing attention on active problem solving strategies, as previously mentioned in the case of disruptive behavior.

In order to have a brief instrument to evaluate whether parents' emotional response to children's behavioral problems corresponded to the above exposed ideas, this article

presents the development of the "Questionnaire of Parental Responsiveness to Disruptive Behavior" (PRDB-Q). In its development, we combined items that collect responses involving the effects of state-orientation -lack of motivation and control- with responses that imply orientation to action - active confrontation of behavioral problems by thinking positively, cooperating with children or helping them to solve their problems. Our purpose is not to develop an inventory that includes all possible ways to acting in front of children's behavior problems - positive and negative-, but a brief tool that can be easily used to provide indicators of the family climate generated by behavior management patterns or styles.

To develop the questionnaire, fifteen items were created and grouped in five categories according to the nature of their content. The first two groups, loss of motivation / discouragement, and loss of control, involve responses from state-oriented people, while the last three - positive thinking, cooperation with children, and support to them - involve forms of action that, in the context of the problems we are dealing with, would be characteristic of action-oriented parents. The grouping of items in these five categories constitutes the first model of the structure of the questionnaire that will be tested. Besides, bearing in mind that forms of parenting are supposed to respond to volitional orientations with different effects on both, children and parents' emotional well-being, the five basic categories could be grouped into two general categories: (1) negative responses to behavioral problems and 2) positive responses to behavioral problems. This way of grouping items into categories of different levels implies hypothesizing a hierarchical structure model of the questionnaire. This is the second model of the structure of the questionnaire whose validity will also be tested

Because parents' responses are observable, it is reasonable to expect, first, that their children will perceive the climate generated by them and, second, that there will be a certain relationship between both perceptions if these perceptions are assessed. However, as the perspectives of parents and children are different, it is likely that such relationship is not too high. Therefore, the magnitude of this relationship will constitute an index of the external validity of the PRDB scores.

In summary, the main objectives of this study are: 1) to develop a brief questionnaire to evaluate parents' perception of how they react to children's behavioral problems, and 2) to compare the relationship between parents and children's perception of how their parents manage behavioral problems and are affected by them.

Method

Participants

Four schools, chosen for reasons of convenience - willingness to participate - provided access to students and their families. Parents from 420 families, 204 men and 216 women

($N = 420$), aged between 27 and 69 ($M = 44.5$; $SD = 5.73$) formed the parents' sample. The children's sample consisted of 189 boys and 202 girls ($N = 391$), between 8 and 18 years old ($M = 12.9$; $SD = 1.89$). They belonged to six different academic levels (5th and 6th level of Primary School, and 1st to 4th level of Secondary School. The majority of them (95.8%) were Spanish, and the rest were children of immigrant families.

Instruments

Parental Response to Disruptive Behavior Questionnaire (PRDB-Q). This questionnaire was designed for the present study. It includes 15 items that refer to five ways of reacting to behavior problems. Three of these ways are positive: 1) *Positive thinking* ("I often try to cope with my child's behavior problems with positive thoughts, to overcome my anxiety), 2) *giving support* ("I often try to transform situations derived from my child's misbehavior providing him/her support and affection), and 3) *cooperation* ("I am excited about doing different activities with my child, despite their misbehavior). The remaining two ways are negative: 4) *loss-of-motivation/discouragement* ("I am so discouraged by the disobedience of my son / daughter, that I don't want to deal with it anymore), and 5) *loss of control of one's own behavior* (e.g.: When my child misbehaves, I use to say things I later regret, and I do not know how to rectify). In order to avoid acquiescence, there are items formulated in positive and negative way. Participants have to show the degree of agreement with item content in a five-point Likert scale from 1 (totally disagree) to 5 (totally agree). This questionnaire is included in the Appendix.

Children's perception of parents' management of behavior problems (PMBP-CH) (Cantero-García & Alonso-Tapia, 2016b). This questionnaire has 20 items to evaluate children's perception of parents' ways of reacting to behavioral problems. Items are grouped in four subscales that refer to four types of reactions to behavior problems: 1) *punishment vs. reasoning* (e.g., - When there is a problem, my father / mother usually sit down and talk to me calmly), 2) *patience* ("Despite the fact that I misbehave, my father / mother acts with patience and knows how to encourage me"), 3) *stress* ("When I rebel or disobey, my father / mother becomes very nervous), and 4) *positive attitude* ("Although sometimes I misbehave and my parents become angry, they like doing activities with me"). These four subscales are indicators of the general family climate (general scale) of dealing with behavior problems. The scales reliability, analyzed by the ω index (McDonald, 1999) is as follows: General family climate scale (ω : .94), reasoning vs. punishment (ω : .84), patience (ω : .81), stress (ω : .88); positive attitude (ω : .87). In order to avoid acquiescence, there are items formulated in positive and negative way. Participants have to show the degree of agreement with item content in a five-point Likert scale from 1 (totally disagree) to 5 (totally agree).

Procedure

The Ethical Committee of the Universidad Autónoma de Madrid approved the study. Then, the authors contacted 12 schools, informed them about the research objectives, and asked for their collaboration. Four schools agreed to participate, sent the questionnaire and the letter of acceptance to the students' parents asking them to fill in the PRDB questionnaire and to allow their children to complete the PMBP, a questionnaire similar to the PRDB. Families were explained how to fill in the questionnaires. It was remarked that both questionnaires were anonymous.

Data analyses

The sample was randomly divided into two subsamples, the first one for the initial analysis of the structural validity of the two models and the second one for cross-validation. In order to study the structural validity of each model, two confirmatory factorial analysis (AFC1, AFC3) were realized. Confirmatory factor analysis estimates were obtained using the maximum likelihood method, after examining whether data were adequate for the analysis. In order to assess model-fit, absolute fit indexes (χ^2 , χ^2/df , GFI), relative fit index (IFI) and non-centrality fit indexes (CFI, RMSEA) were used, as well as criteria for acceptance or rejection based on the degree of adjustment suggested by Hair, Black, Babin and Anderson (2010): ($\chi^2/df < 5$; GFI, IFI y CFI $> .90$; RMSEA $< .08$; SRMR $< .08$). The Akaike Information Criterion - AIC - for model comparison (Akaike, 1987).

Subsequently, a cross-validation analysis of the results obtained with the initial analysis of each model (AFC2, AFC4) was performed using the same estimation method and the same acceptance criteria. Also, in order to verify if the structure of the questionnaire was equally valid to evaluate the response patterns of fathers and mothers, a multigroup analysis by sex (AFC5) was performed. In addition, the reliability of each of the scales was analyzed using the ω index of McDonald (1999). In order to test the predictive validity of the questionnaire, correlations between parents and children's scores were calculated.

Results

Confirmatory factorial analysis and cross-validation analysis: Model 1

Figure 1 shows the standardized estimates of the confirmatory analysis of Model 1 as well as the squared multiple correlations. The χ^2 statistic was significant ($p < .001$), probably due to the size of the sample (Hair et al., 2010), but the ratio χ^2/df and all the remaining adjustment indices are well inside the limits that allowed the model to be accepted ($\chi^2/df = 1.68$; GFI = .93; IFI = .92; TLI = .89; CFI = .93; RMSEA = .056; SRMR = .056).

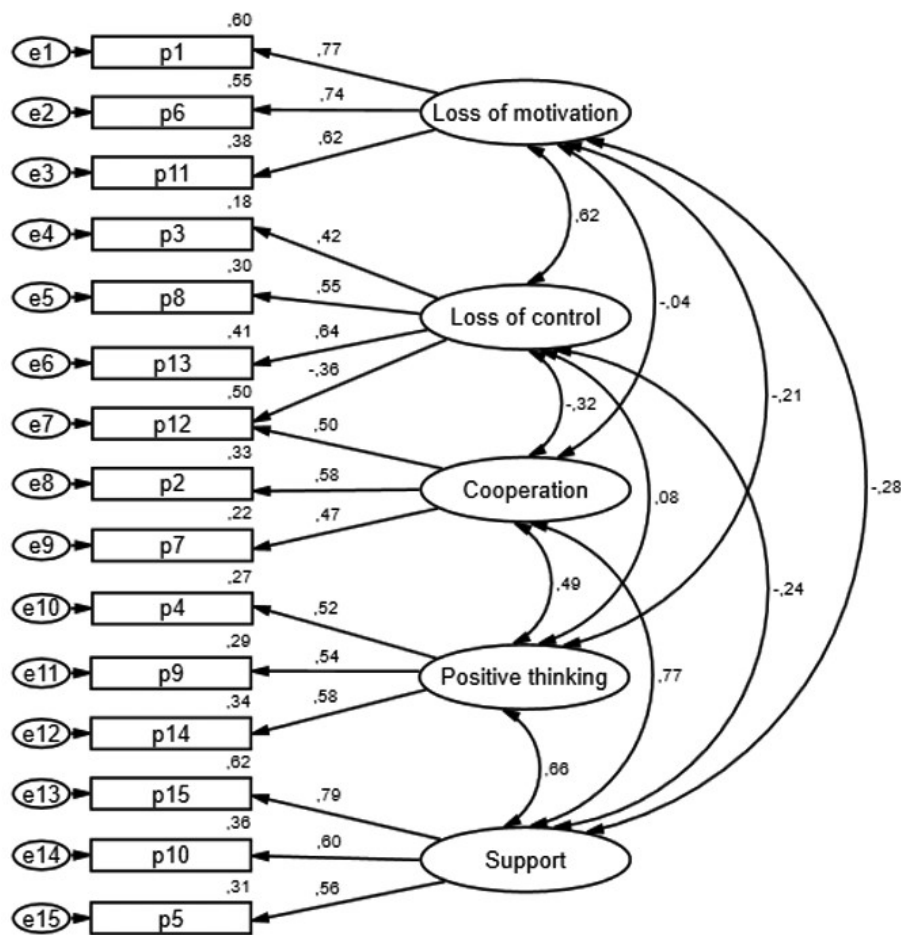


Figure 1. Parents' reactions in front of children's behavior problems. Model 1. Standardized confirmatory solution.

In the cross-validation analysis (AFC2), the χ^2 statistic was significant ($p < .001$), but again the χ^2/df ratio and all the remaining adjustment indices were within the acceptance limits ($\chi^2/\text{gl} = 1.48$; GFI = .92; IFI = .92; TLI = .91; CFI = .92; RMSEA = .034; SRMR = .062). In addition, the group comparison showed that the adjustment indices did not decrease significantly when comparing the results of the two samples if restrictions were imposed for the acceptance of the equality of the samples in relation to the measurement weights ($\Delta\chi^2 = 6.28$, $p = .85$) and structural covariances ($\Delta\chi^2 = 31.45$, $p = .21$). These results suggest there are no differences in the fit of the model in both samples.

Confirmatory factorial analysis and cross-validation analysis: Model 2

Figure 2 shows the standardized estimates of the confirmatory analysis of Model 2 as well as the squared multiple correlations. As in the case of Model 1, the χ^2 statistic was significant ($p < .001$), but the ratio χ^2/gl and all the remaining adjustment indices are well inside the limits that allowed the model to be accepted ($\chi^2/\text{gl} = 1.73$; GFI = .92; IFI = .91; TLI = .88; CFI = .91; RMSEA = .060; SRMR = .063).



Figure 1. Parents' reactions in front of children's behavior problems. Model 2. Standardized confirmatory solution.

In the cross-validation analysis (AFC4) against the χ^2 statistic was significant ($p < .001$), but the χ^2/df ratio and all adjustment indices were within the model acceptance limits ($\chi^2/\text{gl} = 1.50$; GFI = .92; IFI = .92; TLI = .91; CFI = .92; RMSEA = .035; SRMR = .066). In addition, the group comparison showed that adjustment indices did not decrease significantly if restrictions were imposed for the acceptance of the equality between samples in relation to the measurement weights ($\Delta\chi^2 = 6.16$, $p = .86$), structural weights ($\Delta\chi^2 = 9.55$, $p = .79$), structural covariances ($\Delta\chi^2 = 11.55$, $p = .83$) and structural residuals ($\Delta\chi^2 = 15.55$, $p = .74$). These results suggest there are no differences in model fit or both samples.

Models Comparison

As we have seen, adjustment indices of the models are very similar although slightly higher for model 1. The AIC index (Model 1: AIC = 210.00; Model 2: AIC = 217.20) is also slightly better for model 1. However, the difference was very small, and fit of Model 2, which implies that the two second-order factors properly collect the relationship between the first-order factors, was very good. So, we calculated the reliability and validity of first and second order factors, as well as the validity of the Model 2, comparing the answers of parents with those of their children.

Multi-group comparison by gender

In the multi-group analysis by gender of Model 2 (AFC5), again the χ^2 statistic was significant ($p < .001$), but the χ^2/df ratio and all adjustment indices were within the acceptance limits of the model $\chi^2/\text{df} = 1.61$; GFI = .91; IFI = .90; TLI = .89; CFI = .90; RMSEA = .038; SRMR = .067). In addition, the group comparison showed that the fit indices did not decrease significantly if restrictions were imposed for the acceptance of the equality of both samples in relation to the measurement weights ($\Delta\chi^2 = 8.70$, $p = .85$), structural weights ($\Delta\chi^2 = 13.17$, $p = .72$), structural covariance ($\Delta\chi^2 = 15.48$, $p = .75$) and measurement residuals ($\Delta\chi^2 = 48.03$, $p = .07$). Therefore, the model is valid for fathers and mothers.

Reliability

The internal consistency of the scales was calculated using the ω index (McDonald, 1999). The global scales obtained the following reliability indices: ω_{GN} : .80; ω_{GP} : .93. Besides, the reliability of the subscales were: ω_{DM} : .84; ω_{PC} : .81; ω_{CO} : .85; ω_{PP} : .82; ω_{AP} : .90.

Correlations analysis

Table 1 shows the correlations between the scores in the second order factors of the questionnaire answered by parents and the factors of the questionnaire answered by children. The reason for calculating the correlations is to con-

trast 1) whether the perception of children and parents of family climate related in the expected way and 2) to infer what these correlations mean. In general, our results matched our expectancies as we will explain in the discussion.

Table 1. Correlation analyses.

CHILDREN	PARENTS						
	Negative management	Constructive attitude	Demotivation	Loss of control	Cooperation	Positive thinking	Support
PFC-BM	-.103*	.113*	-.106*	-.062	.110*	.053	.095
Reasoning vs punishment	-.095	.054	-.090	-.064	.063	.190	.041
Stress	.119*	.033	.078	.109*	.015	.054	.004
Patience	-.032	.138**	-.060	.006	.130	.066	.119*
Positive attitude	-.092	.169**	-.100*	-.049	.135**	.119*	.132**

PFC-BM: Positive family climate of behavior management.

** Correlation significant at .01%; * Correlation significant at .05%

Discussion

The aim of this study was to develop and validate a questionnaire that measures parents' perception on how they deal with their children's disruptive behavior. Obtained results indicate that the questionnaire has a factorial structure consistent with the proposed model, as evidenced by the good quality of fit indexes, a fact that allowed us to conclude that the models were well estimated. The questionnaire assesses five types of reactions or forms of coping, two of which are grouped in the category of "Negative Management" (NG) - demotivation (DM) and loss of control (PC) - and three grouped in the category of "Positive management" - cooperation (CO), positive thinking (PP) and support (PA). The reliability of the scales that assess is good and, as expected the external validity assessed through the correlations with the corresponding scales of the *PMBP-CH* answered by children, is adequate too.

The *PRBP-Q* allows us to know whether parents' reactions reflect an action orientation and try to master the situation or, by the contrary, focus on the emotional experience of difficulty caused by the problem, an experience that generates lack of control and demotivation. These facts are perceived by children, who value the performance of parents as positive more because of the positive attitude and patience that reflect their behavior than because use of reasoning or punishment or by the lack of shouts and threatens that cause them to stress.

In general, it was expected that children would perceive a positive family climate (*PMBP-CH*) as far as their parents' way to respond to behavioral problems reflected a constructive attitude - based on the orientation to action - and not a negative attitude - based on the orientation to the emotional state. In this latter case, parents would be focusing their attention on the emotions generated by the problem and not on the positive search of a solution. Results support this point of view, but though correlations reached significance,

they were very low, a fact that suggest that parents and children's point of view are very different.

If we look at the correlations between specific factors, the only clear thing is that all the specific factors that translate the parents' orientation, with the exception of lack of control, are associated in the expected direction with the children's perception of a positive attitude. As for the rest of relationships, lack of control is associated with children's perception of behaviors showing stress ("squeals and threats"), whereas parental support is associated with children's perception of patience.

The results described have theoretical implications, as well as implications for evaluation and intervention. With respect to the former, although much was known about the efficacy of different strategies for the management of behavior problems (Gardner et al, 2015), there were no studies assessing parents' perception of the behavioral patterns they used for managing of children's behavior problems. Our results suggest that action-oriented management of behavior problems has a more favorable effect on family climate, that is, on the reduction these problems and on parents' emotional well-being. However, it remains to investigate, first, the conditions favoring that parent manage disruptive behavior more constructively, with action-oriented strategies and, second, whether the use of such strategies makes parents more resilient.

As for implications for the evaluation, the availability of instruments that allow us to know the perception that parents have about their ways of reacting to children's behavior problems is positive for two reasons. First, because it allows us to obtain information that can have a diagnostic as it will inform of parents ways of managing of and reacting to behavior problems that should be changed and, second, because the identification of inadequate managing patterns will help to guide future interventions based on their needs. Besides it is opportune to point the fact that the questionnaire developed complement other instruments previously developed for assessing children's perception of family climate

created by the way of managing behavior problems (Cantero-García & Alonso-Tapia, 2016b). The use of both questionnaires allows assessing the family climate created by the ways of managing behavior problems from different perspectives.

Finally, with regard to intervention, knowing whether the strategies that parents use are action-oriented, what implies a positive management or state-oriented, what implies a negative one, will allow the development of more effective intervention programs. Guidelines will be developed to help parents first, to solve disruptive problems and, second, to self-regulate the emotions aroused by children's behavior problems.

This study has certain limitations. First, the way of sampling the schools may have biased the results therefore limiting the generalizability of findings. A second limitation has

to do with the small amount of items that constitute the scales, which may be affecting the reliability of the measures, although it is quite good. Future studies should take these limitations into account, specifically the latter, because adding more items to the different scales would allow us to know more specific strategies of families in managing their children's disruptive behaviors. Taking into account these limitations will allow the development of better measurement instruments to support effective interventions that contribute to the psychological well-being of families, as well as to the creation of a more positive family climate that contribute to the decrease of disruptive behavior.

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Questionnaire of parental response to disruptive behavior (PRDB-Q)

(For parents with children 11th to 16th years old)

Sociodemographic characteristics of the person -father, mother or tutor- who answers the questionnaire.

Sex: ☐ Men ☐ Women Age: _____ number of children: _____ Course: _____
 Study level: ☐ Primary School ☐ Secondary School ☐ Professional training ☐ High School ☐ University
 Civil Status ☐ Single ☐ Married ☐ Divorced ☐ Widow

Instructions

You will find next some statements on ways of acting and reacting when confronted with children behavior problems. Please mark the degree of agreement with each statement using the following scale. (The questionnaire must be filled in by the parent that devotes more time to the child).

A	B	C	D	E
Completely in disagreement	Quite in disagreement	Neither in agreement nor in disagreement	Quite in agreement	Completely in agreement

1. I feel overburdened by my children misbehavior and often feel about to throw the towel
2. I am excited about doing different activities with my child, despite his/her misbehavior
3. I feel nervous about some of my child's behaviors (crying, tantrums and aggression).
4. I often try to cope with my child's behavior problems with positive thoughts to overcome my anxiety.
5. I consider myself a good father / mother despite my child's temper tantrums.
6. I become so discouraged by my child's lack of obedience that I am about to give up trying.
7. I love sharing time with my child although sometimes it is difficult to control their impulses or activity
8. When my child misbehaves, I use to say things I later regret, and I do not know how to rectify.
9. I feel happy doing activities with my family even though my child does not behave as planned.
10. I try to transform the situations that arise from my child's misbehavior by providing support and affection.
11. I feel discouraged when I have to play with my child because he/she does not obey rules nor accept limits
12. When my son rebels against me, I am not discouraged, I remain calm and act firmly, without shouting him.
13. I usually explode - cry, scream, get angry, etc. - when I cannot control my child's anger.
14. To solve the difficulties that my child's behavior poses to me, I try to think in a positive way.
15. When my child's bad behavior overwhelm me, I try to focus and solve the problem with common sense.